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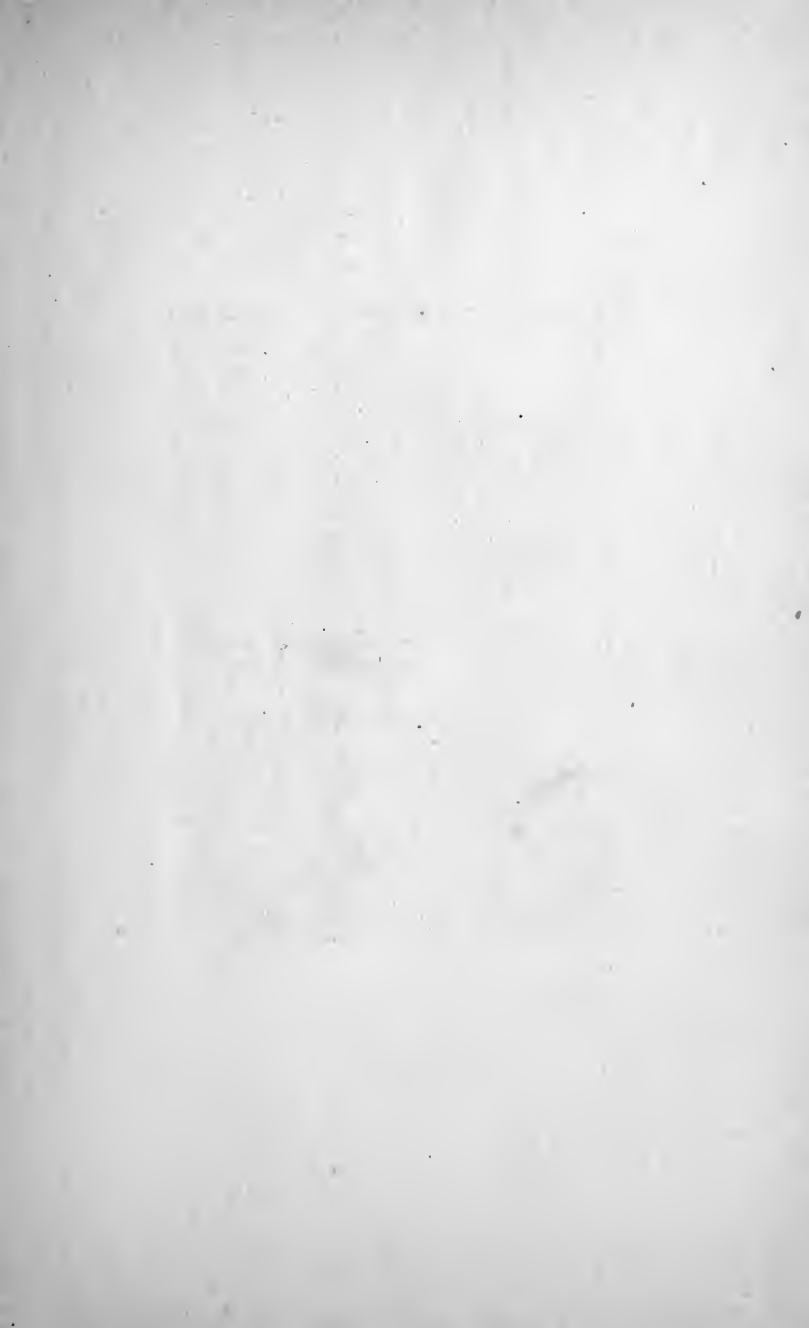


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SONGS OF A VAGROM ANGEL

BY ELSA BARKER

THE SON OF MARY BETHEL

THE FROZEN GRAIL

THE BOOK OF LOVE

STORIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR CHILDREN

THE SCAB

LETTERS FROM A LIVING DEAD MAN

WAR LETTERS FROM THE LIVING DEAD MAN

SONGS OF A VAGROM ANGEL

SONGS OF A VAGROM ANGEL

WRITTEN DOWN

BY

ELSA BARKER



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1916

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FOREWORD

It would not be quite honest for me to include the following *Songs of a Vagrom Angel* among my books of verse without a prefatory note — because they are really not mine at all.

While writing the *Letters From a Living Dead Man*, at the “automatic” dictation of my old friend Judge David P. Hatch, I became very well acquainted with the personality of that angel, deva or sylph, who acted as his courier in the invisible worlds. He called it the Beautiful Being, but I call it the Vagrom Angel. It always refused to name itself.

As a little girl I used to read in the Bible how angels visited the prophets of Israel. The idea appealed to my imagination. When I asked my mother why angels did not visit me, she did not reply as most mothers would, “Such things do not happen in our day;” she said, “Perhaps they do — only you cannot see them.”

So I used to go out into the old apple-orchard north of the house at twilight, and seating myself under a tree, look fixedly at the sky above the mountains and try to see angels. Though I could not see any, I felt sure that it was not the angels’ fault, but mine.

FOREWORD

Had it not been for the faith of that little girl and her mother up there among the New England hills, perhaps I should not have listened to the angel who came to me through the fogs of London one day years afterward, and spoke these songs into my ear, while I wrote them down as fast as my pencil could fly over the paper.

The Vagrom Angel came at eight o'clock one March morning and stayed with me until six the following morning — twenty-two hours, during which the whole of this book was written down, save three of the songs which were given later and in the same way. Of course I did not waste any of those hours in sleep — the Vagrom Angel would not let me.

If some sceptical critic enters by this door which I have thus left wide open, and says that anybody could write forty-nine songs like those of the Vagrom Angel in twenty-two hours, I should reply that perhaps *he* could, but should continue to doubt my own ability.

I had not thought about publishing these songs, supposing they were meant only for me (like other strange writings I have); but one day in a mood of confidence I read them to a well-known poet, who is also one of the dragons of literary criticism, and he said that they must be published, adding with a smile that they were better than my own poems.

I should like the reader to understand that I am serious in what I say; but the personality of this being —

FOREWORD

deva, sylph, angel, or whatever it may be — is so full of joy, so childlike yet so wise, so playful in its profundity, and altogether so unlike any other influence I ever came in contact with, that even in writing about it I unconsciously fall into its mood, as one laughs with a joyous visitor or is grave with a sad one.

Each of these songs is a lyric unit, hung as by a thread from a different idea. No, I could hardly write forty-nine lyrics in one day, whether in "free verse" or any other form.

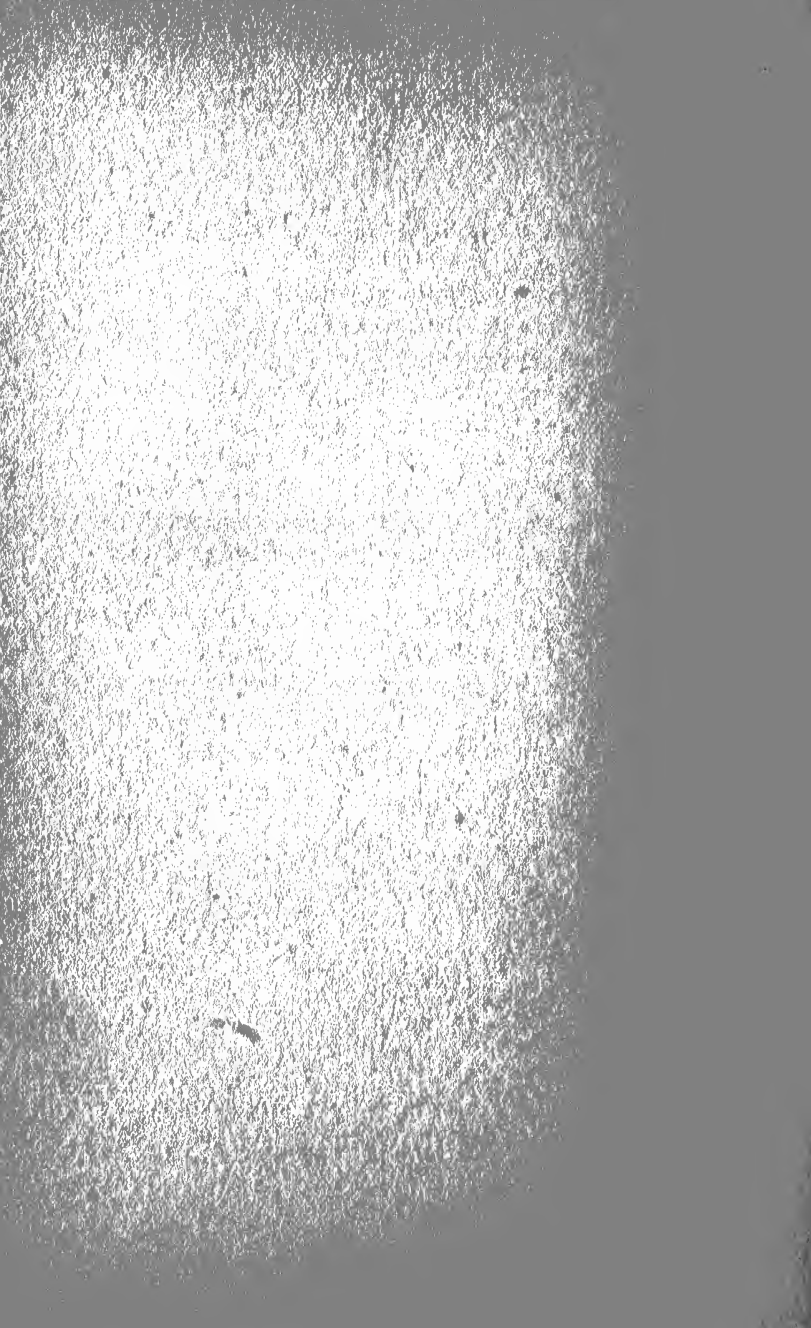
But that is no matter, and I only tell about the angel because it seems truer to do so. My statement adds no value to the songs; it merely explains them.

ELSA BARKER.

Christmas Day, 1915.



SONGS OF A VAGROM ANGEL



SONGS OF A VAGROM ANGEL

I

I HAVE never given my soul to the keeping of an
earthly body,

And so I can sing at all times and seasons.

If I choose one time in preference to another, that is the
privilege of caprice.

All along the roads of the fourth dimension are messen-
gers watching for me;

When my voice is heard they hasten to call their lords.

I have sung in courts and camps, at the bivouac of the
unborn, and in the hearts of men and angels.

Whatever room I choose as a concert-chamber is soon
hung with arras.

Once I sang in a pine-grove, and the trees all shed their
needles with regret that I went away.

When I come to sing in your chamber, leave a crack of
the window open,

That I may go and leave you when you want me most
to stay.

II

GOD walked one night from end to end of the Milky Way;

He was looking for something that He could not find.
I could have told Him where to find it;

But being so simple in most ways, I am like a child who
joys to have a secret from its father,

And so I held my peace.

What think you that God went seeking in all the shops
along the great White Road?

Was it a jewel of rich price, in a ring of cunning work-
manship, which should gleam on His finger up-
held in admonition of the archangels when they
were slow in their world-building?

Nay, dear, God sought not a stone.

But someone had told him of a gay and vagabond angel,
who enjoyed the freedom of space and companion-
ship with all things, yet desired not rule and
power.

Yea, God was looking for me, to make me Lord of a
planet;

But I hid myself in the floating hair of an outbound
comet, and held my breath and smiled.

III

SWEET is the oblivion of sleep;
But sweeter far is the sleep beyond oblivion,
where I wait in the shades that are cast by no
form.

When you weep you deaden the sound of my voice, which
never rises above a whisper,

And the faintest whispering of your heart can reach me,
Though I am far, far off.

Is not the world fair?

It is one of many worlds, and each is fairer than the
one behind it.

The last one of all . . .

But why should I blind you with beauty?

When the clock ticks it is calling you to something?

Can you guess what?

When the sun rises it is lighting your way to somewhere.

Why do you not rise and seek the place?

IV

I SAT at the door of my house and I heard a foot-
step passing in the darkness.

It was long ago, but I have wondered all these years who
passed me on the road that night.

Maybe it was one whom I had long sought.

Maybe it was one whom now I shall never find.

V

MY friendship is unlike that of Summer, for I have no
times and seasons;

Would you know when I am coming, you must learn the
arithmetic of the mood.

Freedom is a bird of many feathers;

It may let one flutter down sometimes in the kitchen-
gardens of the world,

But the bird rests not upon any branch that grows near
the ground.

There was once a wandering minstrel who aspired to
put salt on its tail,

But he disappeared one day and was never found again.

Perhaps he is singing on the other side of the rainbow,

For I heard an unfamiliar strain last night in the chorus
of the spectrum.

He who follows freedom leaves even his own songs be-
hind.

VI

I WAITED by a stream of green water that ran through a sandy desert.

A traveller asked what I waited for, but I could not answer him.

Surely one may wait, without waiting for some thing!

Must even peace have a purpose?

It was quiet beside the green water; the palm-trees waved in the distance, for the wind was rising.

The traveller passed on, but his question remained with me.

What was I waiting for? I really yearned to know.

When one is happy it is foolish to listen to the idle questions of over-busy strangers.

VII

ONE night God whispered a secret in my ear.
I knew it was a secret because I longed to tell it;
Thus may we always know how valuable is a thought.
We treasure the worthless pebbles and scatter the jewels
on the highway;
Such is the wisdom of the world!
Would you know a way to make all men seek you?
Wear a veil!
If you have something to give — throw it out of the win-
dow;
The one who needs it will come along with eyes bent on
the ground.
If you desire something of real value — tell no one.
You will find it maybe when the eyes of Destiny are
turned the other way.

VIII

I WOULD give the rose at my girdle could I find a
friend who would never seek to hold me!
A flower is my fairest jewel, and he who could bring me
such a friend would value the rose at its worth.
I fly from love as the dew flies from the noonday, for it
would burn me up;
Yet my heart is tender as the pollen of a water-lily, and
I shed its fragrance on the air of many planets.
It is sweet to come and go.
To come and not go would be bitter.
To go and not come would not be bitter at all.
Have you ever seen a humming-bird at his courtship?
To meet and part is the ritual of enduring joy.

IX

I WILL give you a charm against sorrow: smile at the
kisses of Pain.

She is a sensitive lover and likes not to be flouted.

I could give you a spell for absence, to bring a loved one
to you;

But I refrain, fearing you might love me.

I have love-philtres in one of my solar cupboards.

Should you put one of my powders in an angel's cup, you
would dream you had found your counterpart be-
hind the grating of eternity, and seek to tear it
down.

The peddler of love-philtres is more dangerous than
Lucifer, who also was a light-bearer.

X

LITTLE one, do you not hear my answer in the call
of the mournful wind?

I have watched at your window when the raindrops beat
upon it;

You knew not I was there, though you were aware of
the rain.

I have whispered to you in the perfume of a rose;
But the flower soon faded and was like me forgotten.

It is a long road that leads to eternity, and the inns for
travellers are few.

I would slake my thirst sometimes at the wells of old re-
membrance;

But the water is so deep I fear to fall therein.

When the sun shines I can see my face reflected — Oh,
many feet below!

But when the darkness comes, I wander on alone.

XI

THERE are thirteen stars in one of the constellations,
there are nine stars in another, but the lesser one is
equally complete.

Why yearn for another's number on the record-book of
heaven?

Thirteen has been called unlucky, and nine was the num-
ber of the muses.

Dweller of earth, do you know your constellation?

Do you know the number of it?

The worlds are made in groups, and so are the souls of
men;

And for every visible world there is a world invisible bear-
ing the same number.

That is why, when I am at home, I rest in your constella-
tion.

Did you take me for an alien because I walk the sky?

XII

I LAUGH when you ask me my name.

A name is a limitation, and I refuse to be limited.
If you call me the light-bringer, there are others who
bring lights;

If you call me the cup-bearer, it will have a well-worn
meaning, and I like fresh metaphors;

If you call me the Unknown, I shall not prove you un-
truthful, for you will never know me.

But the Unknown is no name,

And the secret word of God is never spoken.

XIII

TRUST me, and I will lead you to the garden where
the rose blooms;
Follow me, and your feet shall press the golden sands of
the timeless shore;
Smile at me, and I will teach you the lore of smiles and
tears — of tears as fair as smiles.
Are you lonely in the world where the rivers flow to a
full sea?
Are you tired on the path that leads everywhere?
I am never lonely and I am never weary;
Going with me you see strange places.
When the light shines too brightly you close your eyes;
It is well, for the brightest light is in the darkness.
When it rains you cover your head;
But no cloak can protect you from the drops of rain that
are my caresses.
When the wind howls at night you nestle deeper among
the pillows;
But the wind has a message for you which the smothering
feathers will deaden.
I ride upon the wind and I walk upon the moonbeams.
Do not draw your curtains too close, or I cannot shine
upon you.

XIV

LAST night I heard two lovers plighting troth.

One said, "If you cease to love me I shall die!"
The other said, "I would gladly die for you!"

Then I went away smiling, to play myself at love with
the spirit of a great planet.

We gazed in each other's eyes, and one of us said, "You
cannot cease to love me so long as charm has a
meaning."

And the other said, "I would gladly live a million years
longer for the joy of being with you."

Immortal love is fearless, and leaves the key of its door
on the outside;

If one should turn the key, it can escape by the window;
If a god comes strolling by, he sees the key and enters,
For it is a well-known sign among the star-people.

The mortal love is fearful and always talks of eternity —
Trying to drown the voice of its own doubt.

It would lock up everything — being itself a thief!

XV.

WHY does your soul sing when the noise of the street
is silent?

Why are the birds still when the stars begin their chanting?

I have followed Silence from the belt of Orion to
Berenice's curls — then lost it in the laughter of
my soul.

I am often merry at the jests of the constellations.

Did you fancy that the stars were always serious?

Only the dull never laugh, and the stars are very bright.

XVI

AS you slept last night I breathed upon your pillow.
Had I breathed upon your face, you would have
started up awake.

Does it seem to you strange that you seldom remember at
dawn the journeys your soul made at midnight?

Yes, it is strange.

One night you danced with me in a garland of glad
spirits;

But you left us ere the eastern sky grew rosy.

Why do you leave so early? Do you fear the rose-coloured
sky?

Some morning I shall hold you here till the sun is high
in the heavens;

You will fear to go back by daylight, and so will wait for
the evening;

But when the evening comes, you will have forgotten the
way back.

XVII

THERE was a rumour in heaven that God was weary
of world-building.

The angels smiled, "There are surely worlds enough!"
But one of them said, "He must make one more, for the
pattern is incomplete."

We wondered how he should know of this lack in the
infinite completion,

And when we questioned him curiously, the angel answered us:

"God built in his strength a crore of worlds, and He
builds one now in his weariness;

Its name shall rhyme with mirth."

And when Space was brought to bed with this last child
of her middle-age, the midwives muttered together:

"The child is marked with its mother's longing for the
strawberries of desire!"

XVIII

WHY do you gaze in the fire when you are not chilly?

Why do you talk most when your brain is void of thought?

There is something in each man that seeks the opposing current;

If you fly to the farthest pole — you will wish yourself at home.

The child would be a man, and the man thinks longingly of his childhood;

But there is one stage of the journey where content is found.

If you can pitch your tent there you will become immortal.

There is a lake in that wilderness where blooms the lotus of sweet odours;

The bees go mad with its fragrance,

But they fear their own reflection in the water, and so remain on shore.

If you would be always drunken, do not empty the cup.

XIX

ONE day as I wandered hand in hand with Time I saw a small boat moored by a pebbly shore.

Time, which likes not rest, would have hurried on; but I paused and he waited with me.

I know that I am a charmer, for when I wait Time always stands still.

I wondered who had moored the little boat by the pebbly shore.

"I will wait till the owner comes," I said; for a century is nothing to me, and curiosity is a thirst that must be quenched.

I bade Time leave me — lest he should go of his own accord and I should doubt my charm.

Seven years I waited at the mooring-place of the little boat;

It was thus I learned patience, and the mystery of meditation.

When the owner of the boat came down to the shore and loosed the moorings, I gave him the jewel that shone on my forehead and called him "Master."

He took the jewel, but said, "I am only a slave!"

Why should I contradict him?

What matter by whose delay we learn the mysteries of patience and meditation?

XX

I HAVE pitched my tent in the field of a stranger, but
I did not eat his bread;
The wine of immortality I carry with me, and so am never
thirsty.

An angel can long subsist on its own substance.
When you find that bread is nourishing, be sure that the
host is a friend;

If it sticks in your throat, it is time to bind on your
sandals and take to the road again.

To sleep beneath the stars is no hardship;
Do not the roses the same and the pure-skirted water-
lilies?

The hospitality of the universe is famous among the
comets;

There is always an extra plate for the late-comer and a
flower for his buttonhole.

XXI

I LOVED a soul in the invisible;
But the soul had slept for a thousand years and knew
me not.

Ah, the joy of loving a sleeping thing! All true lovers
know that wonder.

Sleep is a great magician.

His spells are woven in the darkness between the worlds;
His philtres are made of herbs that grow by the great
river of forgetfulness which flows by the throne
of the All-knowing.

Could I be weary of anything, I should be weary of
knowledge!

So many souls have responded to my lightest call!

It rests me to hang in adoration above an unconscious
sleeper.

Some day that soul will awake;

But when I see the flickering of its eyelids, I shall run
away with my garment held high lest it impede
the swiftness of my footsteps.

So shall I make that soul a poet.

It will vaguely know that somewhere it has been loved by
an angel,

And the dumb yearning to re-find that love will inspire
immortal songs.

XXII

MY lamp flickered in the wind, and I knew that a storm was coming.

I do not fear a storm, but I would not have my lamp blown out,

So I hid me in the shelter of a poet's tent.

Even a storm is a blessing in disguise;

The well-wishers often wear veils and go with bent heads.

The sunshine is a friend, but sometimes he remains too long and the host is weary;

The darkness of sorrow is restful, it prepares one for another day of gladness.

I thought of these things as I waited in the shelter of the poet's tent;

And while I thought, he took up his harp and sang.

Did he know that I was there? Was he singing to entertain me?

I will sing in my turn when he is silent;

If he knew that secret, he would cease in the midst of a song.

His ignorance is like fresh water in my throat, for my evening meal was salt with too much knowledge.

XXIII

UNGRATEFUL one! You complain of weariness,
while I stand in your presence singing!

There are those who would wait long in the hope that I
would give them even one of my songs,

And I have given you a score!

But truly it is well that you know not the honour which
comes unbidden upon you;

Should your heart swell up with pride, I could not sing
for you.

I delight in little children who strike at me in play,
Who call me bad names and turn their backs upon me.
When men bow low at my feet, I always am not there.
God lets me wander at will through the rose-gardens of
His palace;

Only one command He lays upon me — if I see a courtier
coming, I am to lower my veil.

There is an old gardener in the celestial estate who is my
best friend.

He talks to me of the way flowers grow, and how the
water feeds them;

He knows the mystery of perfumes and the lore of winds.

I need not veil my face in his presence, for he is blind;

He gazed upon God one day and his eyes were smitten
with glory.

To him I am only a harmless child, with a love for trees
and flowers.

I feel at home in his presence.

XXIV

A LOVER is an inspiration, but who loves better than I?

If I came to the whole world as I come to you, trade and travel would cease, and song would become the only business of the world.

That is why I am niggardly with my love and bestow it on few;

For I would not disturb the business of trade and travel. An inspiration is something breathed in.

At the expiration of my fancy for you, you will not sing like this any more.

XXV

I HUNGER for a seat at the tables of earth, but I will
not eat your fare.

I love to create, but I leave my creations for others to
enjoy.

I love to love, but I know not jealousy.

If you find another fairer than I, I shall weary of you and
go love him,

So beware, if you would hold me!

XXVI

WHY do you not ask favours from me? In certain
moods I would grant them.

I have the ear of those who could give you whatever you
want;

But I am too wise to bring you anything you might place
between you and me.

I would not give you a crown, for its weight might deaden
your hearing,

And I speak only in a whisper.

I would not give you burdensome treasure, for you might
think of it,

And I would have you occupied only with me and my
songs.

Perhaps you are wiser to ask naught.

When mortals have my friendship, what other things can
they need?

XXVII

IF you are weary you can rest to-morrow;
Your weariness will not affect my singing.
If you should keep me waiting, I might go and never re-
turn.
The Saviours of mankind may wait on a beggar's pleas-
ure, but I am not sent to redeem the world.
I come to the world because I enjoy my visits.
I would not wait in the ante-chamber of a King;
But many a King has shut himself up with me, denying
the calls of the world.
I beckoned one King from the other side of the planet,
And he followed my voice as a lambkin follows its
mother.
He was a wise Monarch and gave his people freedom —
Thereby securing it himself, that he might play with me.

XXVIII

YOU complain that you can never know me, but do
you know yourself?

If I chose I could tell you a story that would open the
ears of your memory!

You think so much of the future that you forget the past.
Some day you will forget me, when the walls of another
birth are built around your spirit;

But I warn you now that I shall insert the knife of my in-
sinuating presence between the bricks of every fu-
ture house that your soul builds.

When you feel the wind that blows through the crevice,
you will shiver with delicious cold,

And I shall stand outside the pierced wall and laugh to
myself in the rain.

XXIX

THERE is a story going the rounds of heaven that a man of earth who would make himself a god, borrowed a flower from my hair and set it upon his forehead.

No, dear, it was not a rose, but a lovelier blossom that never ventures to show itself in the inclement weather of earth.

He became quite bold, this borrower, and even jested with time about the death of mortals.

Some day I shall lie in wait for him at the corner where the wind of the west crosses the north wind,

And when he is looking the other way, I shall snatch the flower from his head.

Then Time and I will have our little jest together about the death of mortals.

XXX

YOU need not be a prisoner in that cell of clay.

Every night I remove the bars of your prison window, and you could fly away if you only had the courage.

There are wings on the shoulders of all men,

But being invisible the wings are never spread.

They are stronger than iron though lighter than thistle-down;

They can carry a weight as heavy as the eternal part of a soul.

If you should ever spread those wings you would know how I love freedom,

And chase it around the mulberry-bush whereon the stars all grow.

The wings are behind you and you never see them: so also is the past.

Do you guess my meaning, daughter of earth?

He who remembers, sees; and he who sees, can fly.

But you remain a prisoner in the cell of clay!

XXXI

THERE is a sore spot in the heart of Truth, and no balm can ever heal it.

One day I met with Truth on a lonely road and offered my sympathy, for I am a great healer;

But Truth smiled sadly and shook his head.

"So long as men fear me," he said, "how can I be comforted by even an angel's hand?"

"But the sore in thy heart is grievous," I breathed, "and blood drops stain the ground at thy feet.

Maybe I can heal thee, friend."

"Wert thou really a friend of mine," said Truth, "thou wouldst tell thine earthly singer to acknowledge the debt that is owing thee;

Then perhaps there would be one blood drop less to stain the ground at my feet."

So I came to wonder if I were greater or less than Truth;

For I had not dreamed before that a mortal could owe me anything.

XXXII

BESIDES the blind gardener who waters the flowers
in God's garden,
I have another friend and his name is Poverty.
I know he is no friend of yours, for I have heard you
say so, but him do I love well.
He walks beside me on the long roads of the universe,
and we two are free as birds before their nest-
building.
But Wealth is my enemy; he is the only one who can bar
a door in my face.
The poor will always let me in — though they are too
dull with hunger to enjoy the subtlety of my wit;
The weary let me in — but they always mistake me for
Sleep, who wears a cloak of the same colour as
mine;
The sorrowful cry to me — but they call me by a prouder
name than I desire to bear, and being a modest one
I cannot answer their prayers.
But the wealthy rarely unbar the door, they take me for
a thief.
In that they are very cunning, for I would pilfer their
pride and leave them only bliss;
And that is no shield against beggars and borrowers.

XXXIII

ONE day you entertained an angel unawares.

It was not I, but my brother Joy-in-Grief.
You laughed at pain and the laugh became a jewel;
I shall pin it on your breast when you come to play in
my garden at the close of the Solar Day.
Now Joy-in-Grief is called by many names, and some are
beautiful;
The angels call him Mastership,
The demons call him the Impregnable,
The children call him Mother's Arms,
And old men call him Death.
They are all deceived except the angels, who see things
as they are;
That is why they so rarely come down to dwell among
blinded men.
He who thrills with pleasure at the touch of pain still
knows the difference between pain and pleasure;
But he calls them the two poles of the magnet of sensation.
Let him guard well the magnet in his cupboard and turn
the key upon it!
Then will it draw to his house all the glory of the kingdoms of this world;
But in heaven it will be worthless as a pebble.
Can you guess why?

XXXIV

I SAW an outcast with a tattered garment go by one day
on a treeless road.

"How great," I said, "are the differences in this mad
world whose headlight is the moon!

I will speak to the Lord about it."

At twilight I saw the outcast again;

He was sitting under a public tree with his back against
the wall of another man's garden.

"Poor lonely one!" I said to him. "Can I not give you
something?"

"You are giving me a priceless thing," he smiled, "and
that is your sympathy.

What may I give you in return?

Shall it be the joy of my freedom?

My fellowship with the sparrows who eat with me from
God's hand?

A song of my orchestra — the crickets of evening?

A page from the book of wonder that I open each night
in dreams?

Or the mystery of the love of God that fills my soul
with rapture?"

Passing down the road I whispered to myself:

"How great are the differences in this mad world whose
headlight is the moon!

I will speak to the Lord about it."

XXXV

I HAVE loved God well, though I once eluded Him;
For not even God shall bind me.

When a bird-song leaps in the silence, I think of His call
in the dewy morning of creation.

Thrilling we all awoke from our long sleep at the sun-
rise of the new day.

He too was all a-thrill with the energy of dawn.

He called us to Him one by one and gave us our new
names,

Even as the fathers of new-born men give names upon
the earth.—

Sly listener! You thought I would forget myself and
name myself;

But you cannot catch me napping!

Who knows an angel's name can call him by it,

And I am not at the beck and call of any soul on earth.

XXXVI

ON a night in June I stood under the deodar-trees
and watched the moon.

"Its light," I said, "is softer than the first gleam of
love in a virgin's heart;

Its face is round and jocund as that of a shopkeeper
trying to sell us something at twice its value;

Its other side is mysterious as I am myself, and no
man has ever solved its puzzle.

Why does the moon charm the earth-people?

Is it because it is soft, mysterious and deceitful?"

Then I sped across the prairies of æther and stood upon
the moon.

It was no longer luminous, its hardness hurt my feet;
And I found that it had nothing either to sell or give
me;

Its empty frankness was brutal as a blow.

I sped round to the other side to solve its mystery,

But found there nothing that had not been commonplace
for a million years.

"It is neither soft, deceptive nor mysterious," I said.

Then I turned my gaze toward the everyday earth I had
left . . .

Behold it was more marvellous than a thousand moons!
Since then I have shone like a moon for the souls of
poets.

XXXVII

I HEARD two angels talking together, and one of them said:

“Why is a man so different from an angel, when he also is a child of God?”

And the second angel answered:

“A man is different from anything else in the universe, because he forgets each day the experiences of the last,

And so he can never be trusted to patrol the roads of the sky.”

The gossip of heaven is often as idle as the gossip of grass-hoppers!

Even a cricket knows the difference between a man and an angel;

For a man looks not at the ground whereon he walks, he crushes many a life;

While the passing of an angel leaves all the world a-thrill.

XXXVIII

WHEN the rain pattered on the roof, did you think it
was only drops of water?

When you saw the purple shadows dimpling the sunset
hills, did you fancy that the picture was made of
light and shade?

When the moonlight shining in your eyes made you
drunken, drunken, did you prattle about the re-
flected light of the sun?

You mortals are lovers of words and lovers of reasons for
beauty;

But beauty is beyond reason.

Time and space have proved beyond the reason of the
wisest of men,

And so has the glamour of love.

I know a logic beyond time and space;

That is why I am so illogical, why space cannot hold me
nor time make me old.

Shall I call you my pupil, daughter of earth?

XXXIX

I GAZED at a shadow so long that I lost the light behind it.

One is only safe with shadows if one carries light within.
I fear neither shadow nor light!

As I know the meaning of both, neither has power to harm me.

If you knew why shadows are fearful you would cease to feel their menace;

If you knew the meaning of light you would yourself be a light in a dark place.

One day I walked a path where there was neither light nor shadow;

But I could not explain to you the wonders I saw there.
Where there is neither light nor darkness, there God can cast His reflections.

That seems to you impossible, because you are neither light nor dark;

If you were either you would know your opposite — and the neuter state where the two join hands.

But that is too deep for you and too deep for the world of twilight people.

XL

TEARS in your eyes, poor infant?

'Twas only a touch of your own Father's hand!
He sought to caress you with the life-giving contact of
knowledge and heart-break;

But knowing not the weight of His great hand, He made
you weep.

XLI

I SAW a bird on a bough and wondered if he were dreaming.

And then another came; the two sat long together and not a note they sang.

The sun went down in the west, and the shadows wrapt their veils around the shivering earth;

The moon arose behind the mountains, the full-faced harvest moon that turns all things to magic.

The two birds on the bough were dark against the moon's gold face.

And still no note they sang — their silence thrilled the world.

And I forgot the meadows and the hills, the trees and the golden harvest;

For I knew that those two dreaming birds were the heart of a miracle.

Had I moved the space of a hand, they had lost their disk of glory.

"Dear Lord," I said, with a thrill of joy, "I am part of the miracle! —

It could not be without me that spellbound gaze upon it!"

XLII

WHEN you look toward the East at the sunrise, does
it only mean the dawn of another earthly day?
The East has a deeper message.
The light of the North is cold as a friend who has ceased
to love us;
But knowledge comes that way for him who fears not to
shiver.
In the South is a veil of flame;
Could you see through the fiery mist, you would behold a
face that can never be forgotten.
When you gaze at the golden West, cling fast to the earth
behind you;
The souls go out that way and sometimes wander long.
Could you face four ways at once you would be as wise as
Brahma.

XLIII

ONE day I met a dragon and paused for a moment's gossip.

It was on a by-path in the forest of good and evil, and the leaves of the trees were dripping with the tears of fearful souls.

His beauty was of a type that is not admired in heaven ;
But I had always a roving eye, and the light on his scales was wonderful to see.

"Tell me, brother," I said, " why you wear your nails so long.

When you scratch at the stony hearts of men you might break them to the quick."

You have never heard a dragon laugh? Then you are not a musician.

The discords of dragon-laughter are often heard in the orchestra of God.

"May I scratch you with one of my long talons?" the dragon laughed at me.

"Yes," I replied, " for I love unwonted thrills."

Then playfully as a child he raised his knotted forefoot and I reached forth my hand ;

But the touch of his claws was like velvet, they bent against my fingers.

"Now do you understand?" he said, and his voice was sad and mournful.

XLIV

THE dream hours are not wasted.

Have you not heard that one lays up treasures
in heaven?

I have a hoard of rapturous memories that I would not exchange
for the rubies of God's necklace.

'Tis because I am so rich that the angels honour me so.

Sometimes I give a jewelled ring to one of my fellow-
dreamers.

By the duller eyes of earth the jewel could not be seen ;

But to him who wears it on his finger it becomes a glass
of visions, wherein he sees the mysteries of all
the worlds.

Hold out your hand in the sunlight !

A hand is fair when the sun reveals its colour ;

But I am not generous to-day and I keep my jewel awhile.

Sometime — but I must not be bound by promises.

If you dream a little every day, you will have a treasure
of your own to guard, and need not covet mine.

XLV

WHEN your heart flows out in boundless love to the whole world of men and women, then think also of me.

Perhaps you will find the reason why I have never taken an earthly body and dwelt as a man among men ;

For a body of dust is a limit to the loving of a soul.

It sees a face and finds it fair, forgetting the myriad who are unseen.

But I? I can touch with my tenuous hand the hearts of a thousand creatures ;

When they turn in love to each other I feel they are loving me.

I need no home, for I dwell in the love of the homeless ;

Among the sheltered ones I have my dwellings, too.

When I bring lovers together I am present at their mating ;

I help to awaken to life the souls their parenthood yearns for.

Did you fancy I was lonely, walking the rainbow of love?

XLVI

I HEARD a sound in the distance that was like the
brushing of a butterfly's wing against the shoulder
of Morning;

And I said to my sister the dew-drop,
"Awake, dear heart, for the fairies have gone to sleep!"
It is perilous to sleep when the fairies are also dozing;
For if they catch you on the road of dreams, it is hard to
elude their grasp.

But the dew-drop was drowsy and bade me begone, and
when I returned to call her again,
I saw the dragon Day, licking his golden chops in the field
where she had lain.

"The fairies have missed her," I said, "she has gone to
the Great Beyond."

And the butterflies dusted their wings,
And the Morning shrugged his shoulder,
And I sat on a bough of the Tree of Knowledge and sang
a sad, low song.

XLVII

LISTENING at the door of earth, I have heard men
say that the future life is a dream.

How wise they are in their ignorance, these men who talk
so loud!

All life is a dream, my children, but you are not the
dreamer;

The Dreamer rests on a bed of down plucked from the
breast of the swan of eternity.

He turns in His sleep sometimes, and a world comes to
an end;

He smiles in His sleep sometimes, and men know the
Golden Age;

Sometimes He is restless, too, and the revolutions come.

Will the Dreamer never awake? Who knows! I would
hold Him sleeping;

For if He should rise from His nest on the down of
eternity, He might rub His drowsy eyes — and I
should forget to be.

XLVIII

WHEN the lovely mood comes and the visions come,
If you hold your breath I too may come walking
down a ray of light that bends with the weight
of my charm.

I can walk the darkness also without path or star to guide
me;

But then I am not afraid of the dark.

It holds me as a lover holds his beloved;

There is no fear in love or in the darkness for me.

Once I met in the dark night a spirit of surpassing loveliness,

And we went hand in hand toward the midnight hour together.

When midnight struck on the clock-tower of the constellations, we unclasped hands and parted.

How did I know that the spirit was of surpassing loveliness, if we met in the darkness, you wonder?

Do you not know that the loveliest beauty is that which
can not be seen with the eyes that are made for
sunshine and the unlovely things revealed by the
sunshine?

If you should ever love anyone who seemed lovable in the
light, go with him into the darkness;

You may find something there you have never known before.

XLIX

TO-DAY I went for a walk with the genius of Silence,
Down where the road of dead desires crosses the
road of future hopes.

Hand in hand we stood and gazed in both directions.

I said, "The past is a treasure-house of experience; how-
ever rich the future, it can never rival the past."

The eyes of Silence were like stars when they shine upon
the desert,

But no word he spoke.

One of the joys of being with Silence is the unbroken music
of my own voice.

"I will take the road to the right," I said, "the road of
future hopes, for I was always enamoured of the
Unknown.

You, brother Silence, go down the road of dead desires."

And Silence turned and left me with his finger on his lips,

And his eyes like the stars that shine above the desert.

Alone am I now on the road of the future, where one may
babble unrebuked;

But often shall I regret the choice I made —

Leaving to Silence the treasure-house of the past, that I
might have made musical with song.

L

WHEN two come together out of the mystery of the past they gaze — and sometimes pass on ;
When they do not pass on 'tis because they have gazed before.

I know a man and a maid who wove a chain of roses,
And when the roses were withered they too passed on ;
But a man and a maid are no more than a ray of light and a shadow.

Which is the ray and which the shade? Nay, child, you ask too much ;

For man and woman are self-existent and self-completing.
Can there be a shadow without light, or light without a shadow?

The form that casts the shade is one with the shadow cast.
Do you see the meaning of form and the One that is hidden within it?

When two clasp hands and part they go toward the vaster meeting ;

For the path of life is a circle, be sure they shall meet again.

LI

SOME night when you least expect me, I shall thrust
one of my naked feet through an aperture in the
veil of nothingness that hides me from your eyes.
Seeing the sole of my foot, your heart will swell with
song.

Then will I dance upon the air above your head;
But if you raise a hand to touch me, I shall scurry up the
ladder of the invisible —

So beware of too much boldness!

Only a bit of my ankle and the moving curves of my
foot —

No more shall you see that night.

If you throw back your head to enlarge the vision,
I shall laugh and spring lightly from your forehead to my
car that waits in the sky.

Never look too long upon the ground:

You might miss the vision of that naked foot with its sole
like a curled white roseleaf.

LII

YOU listen with joy to my music, but have you heard
God sing?

I am only a hoarse minstrel with a stringless lyre when He
opens His lips in song.

The sob of the sea is His wail of lamentation for those
who love Him not,

The sigh of the summer wind is His breath,
And when the tempest blows, He is hurrying with some
business on the highroads of the sky.

The songs of birds and of women are only notes in His
great canticle,

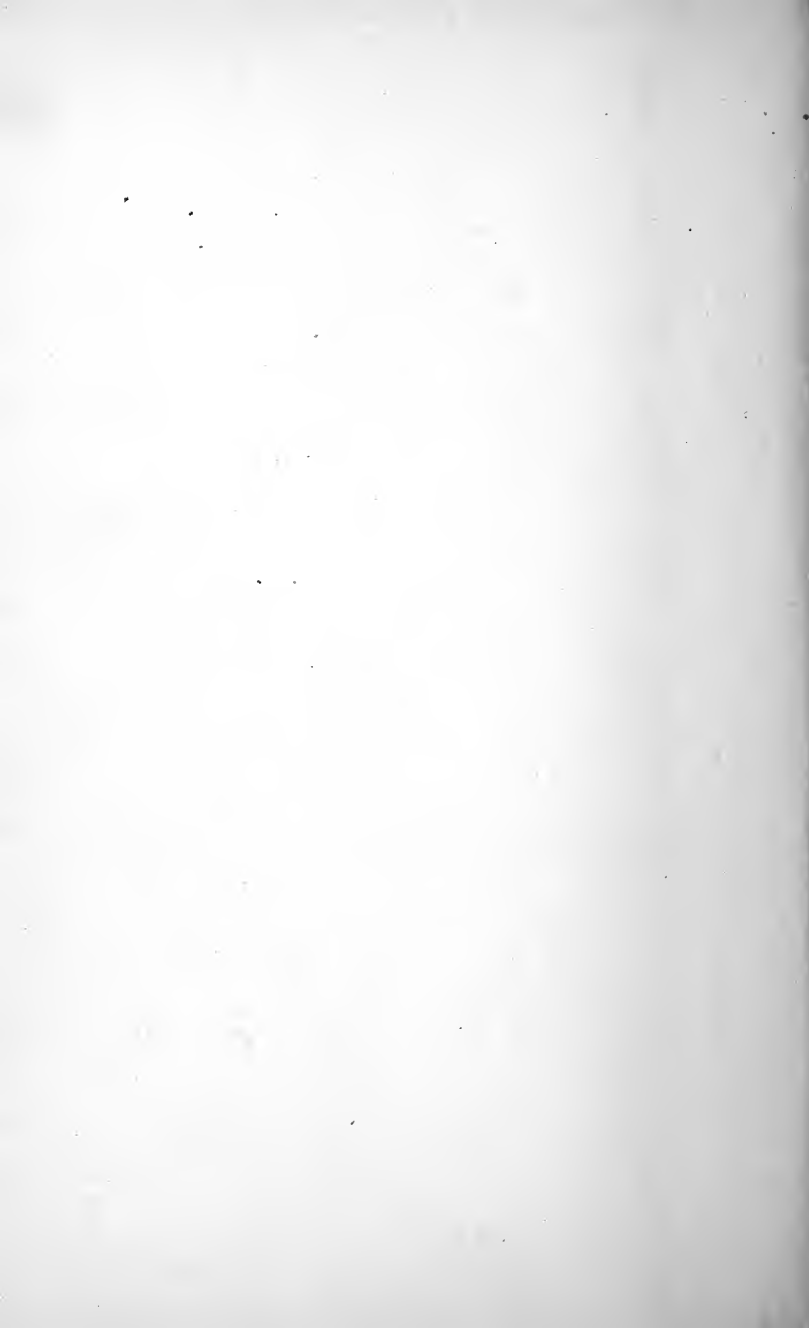
And the music of the spheres is the tuning of His harp.

If He ever sang for you, you would not listen to me;

But so great is my love for you, that I shall urge Him to
come to you some day clad in His singing-robcs.

THE END





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